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THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY -- MASTER AND DEPENDENT

Recommendation: That President Reagan re-establish the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), and charge Vice-President Bush and his staff with responsibility for implementing that decision.

Problem

Every recent President has encountered major difficulties with the intelligence community. During his term and in retrospect, he has been dissatisfied with the relationship between policy makers and intelligence producers. The relationship has elements of both love and hate, or mastery by an Administration over, and dependence by an Administration on, the organizations that make up the community. The seriousness of the national stakes involved in dealing with current international problems and preparing now for future international threats and opportunities impose on the President obligations to discipline the intelligence community, and to be himself disciplined by information they, and often only they, can provide. The national need, then, is for a judicious balance between mastery and dependence. Creating and maintaining such a balance in the bureaucratic and political jungle require special efforts. There is no shortage of partisans to tilt the balance toward the bureaucratic interests of intelligence organizations or toward the political and psychological needs of policy officials. The missing role is that of advocates of the balance itself, advocates who can define and pursue it in terms appropriate to changing policy concerns and intelligence capabilities.

Inadequate mastery of the intelligence community results in

- inertia about priorities and perceptions and a lack of responsiveness to changes in policy priorities and the international environment, including the changing floods of technological capabilities;
- filtering to suppress the transmission of information that reflects adversely on the previous performance of the intelligence community or that would strain relations between high intelligence officials and policy makers;
- hiding behind a cloak of magic and secrecy that prevents policy makers from knowing what the intelligence community is doing, to what extent it is carrying out the policies of the Executive Office, and whether it is providing the best and most timely information that it can;
- inappropriate tasking of the community from inadequate awareness of the real capabilities of the community, and of the nature of the political and technological constraints that surround it;
- mobilization of Congressional, media, and bureaucratic pressures on the Administration, through leaks and selective briefings by factions in the intelligence community that have particular policy and budget preferences.

Countermanding or refusing to accept the necessary dependence on the intelligence community and its products results in

- curtailing the flow of information from intelligence that warns of problems unsatisfactorily dealt with by current policies. Unwarranted optimism goes unchecked;
- enforcing orthodoxy on intelligence that provides no place for a realistic recognition of the uncertainty of world events and the fluid nature of U.S. policy concerns. Alternative possibilities often go unrecognized or unreported;
- disregarding expertise about current and potentially available collection technologies, information requirements, and interpretation of the intentions, sensitivities and capabilities of foreign governments;
- providing to the community all too clear signals of the nature and conclusions of the intelligence products that are desired by the Executive Office.

Proposal

This set of problems indicates the needs for a quality assessment and control mechanism that is not simply an agent for the bureaucratic interests of the intelligence community or the political interests of an Administration. We recommend a mechanism modest in cost with no permanent bureaucratic character and interests of its own; namely, the re-establishment of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB). Beyond the contribution of the Board to the problems noted above, this mechanism has three immediate advantages. First, it can be brought to life without a lengthy process of Congressional action and inter-departmental coordination. Second, the mechanism has historical precedent, a precedent well-known to some of the President-Elect's senior advisers who served on the Board in previous Administrations. Third, it provides a clear sign of the new Administration's commitment to improving the quality of intelligence as it contributes to national policy.

The Mechanism

PFIAB would be an advisory board with about a dozen members appointed by the President. Each of them should combine knowledge of the intelligence community with broad vision and foresight about the problems of the U.S. in the international environment. The individuals should be widely respected for their integrity and wisdom, and should be managers and senior decision-makers with distinguished records in the realms of military, economic, science and technology, and international affairs. They should not have personal political ambitions. The Board would

function as a whole and through temporary panels formed to deal with particular problems in which some members would be augmented with appropriate experts. The Board would report to the President and Vice-President through the National Security Adviser, who would be entitled to comment on their reports, but not to block their transmittal to, or the Board's access to, the President and Vice-President. A small staff independent from the National Security Adviser would support the work of the Board.

General Emphasis

The Board would specialize in tasks that require striking a judicious balance between mastery and dependence, and that otherwise suffer from the lack of a prestigious advocate in the Executive Branch. It would

- o Review the fit between Administration goals, the intelligence priorities they imply, and the actual policies and resource allocations of the intelligence community. Pertinent policies and allocations include R&D, collection asset assignments, and the distribution of analytic resources;
- o Alert the President, Vice-President and the National Security Council to emerging or potential national policy problems according as they have significant implications for required intelligence support;
- o Address chronic problems of organization within the intelligence community and between its members and policy users where some neutral view seems to be badly needed;
- o Assess finished intelligence on major substantive matters to determine whether it can be improved, and, if so, how;
- o Respond to special assignments from the President, Vice-President or National Security Adviser.

Illustrative Tasks

Some examples of the sorts of specific problems the Board would handle

may be helpful. The list is purely illustrative. Its items are not ranked in order of importance, nor does it imply that these problems alone warrant the re-establishment of PFIAB.

- o Intelligence readiness to function in a war context;
- o Expediting the R&D cycle for improved intelligence collection and processing (now 10 to 15 years);
- o Improving the capacity of the intelligence community to surge analytic resources in response to changes in international tension hot spots;
- o Alternative relationships between the analytic and operational elements now together in the CIA;
- o Minimizing the dependence of U.S. intelligence on allied sister services with which we cooperate;
- o Intelligence support requirements for the SALT III process;
- o Intelligence support requirements for improving U.S. international economic competitiveness (including technology transfer policy).

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